

LESSON 9: AMERICAN MILITARY TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS, AND COURTESIES



*cannon salutes
courtesies
customs
dress
esprit de corps
mess
position of honor
reporting
ruffles and flourishes
salute
self-propelled
traditions
uncasing
uncovered*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of military traditions, customs, and courtesies is to develop pride in the military service and to establish strong bonds of professional and personal friendships — patterns of behavior that enhance the military way of life.

TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

Listed below are two of the more common military traditions and customs: **dress** and ceremonies.

DRESS

Dress sets the branches of the armed forces (the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard) apart. Each branch has formal, semi-formal, black tie, white tie, informal, and casual dress codes appropriate for various occasions and settings. All branches have a standard

of dress, which they require their members to follow.

CEREMONIES

Throughout history, military ceremonies represent the pride, discipline, and teamwork of the armed forces. Some of the more common ceremonies include parades, reviews, inspections, occasions that honor and recognize individuals with awards for outstanding service, and formal dining. Ceremonies help preserve tradition and to build esprit de corps.

Personal Salutes

Personal salutes are honors given to dignitaries, civil officials, and military officials. They include **cannon salutes**, **ruffles and flourishes**, and a march or anthem, depending on the official.

Cannon Salutes

A cannon salute honors civil or military officials from the United States or foreign countries. A commissioned officer directs the firing of the cannons, whether they are towed, **self-propelled**, or tank mounted. The time interval between rounds is three seconds. Usually, the U.S. armed forces does not fire a cannon salute on Sunday, between retreat and reveille, or on national holidays. Independence Day and Memorial Day are exceptions to this rule and have special cannon salutes.

The number of guns fired depends on the position of the official. For example, the military fires a 21-gun salute for the president, members of a reigning royal family, and chiefs of state of foreign countries. The vice president receives a 19-gun salute, as do ambassadors and the

Speaker of the House of Representatives. Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and generals of the Army and Air Force also receive a 19-gun salute.

When you are in the audience on such an occasion and in uniform, you should render the hand salute as the official party does. When in civilian clothing, you should remove any head covering to salute.

Ruffles and Flourishes

The armed forces plays ruffles and flourishes together — ruffles on drums and flourishes on bugles. The number of ruffles and flourishes also depends on the position of the official. The president, vice president, secretaries and assistant secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, cabinet members, and ambassadors all receive four ruffles and flourishes.

Additionally, a military band may play a march or anthem following the ruffles and flourishes as an honor to special officials. For example, the band may play: the national anthem or “Hail to the Chief” for the president, ex-presidents, or president-elect; a march for the vice president; the national anthem of the United States or the anthem of another country for ambassadors; and, a march for generals, admirals, and most other armed services officials.



COURTESIES

Courtesies honor people with actions or words to show respect, authority, and achievement. The use of titles and salutes are two courtesies that honor members of the military.

TITLES

One military courtesy is the use of titles to show respect for superiors. When you are talking to someone in the military, address that person by his or her rank. This form of a courtesy is not only a standard greeting in the military, but it shows respect for the responsibility that person has earned.

Displayed below are the correct titles by which you should address most individuals in the U.S. Army.

| <u>Title</u> | <u>How to Address</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| All Generals | “General” |
| Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels | “Colonel” |
| Majors | “Major” |
| Captains | “Captain” |
| Lieutenants | “Lieutenant” |
| Chaplains | “Chaplain” |
| Cadets | “Mister,” “Miss,” or “Cadet” |
| Officer Candidate | “Candidate” |
| Warrant Officers | “Mister” or “Miss” |
| Sergeant Major | “Sergeant Major” |
| First Sergeants | “First Sergeant” |
| All other Sergeants | “Sergeant” |
| Corporals | “Corporal” |
| All Specialists | “Specialist” |
| Privates and Privates First Class | “Private” |

If you do not know the person's name, you may address:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Privates as | "Soldier" |
| All medical officers | "by their rank" |
| Male officers as | "Sir" |
| Female officers as | "Ma'am" |

Conversation with others in the military should be formal and correct. Use proper titles to show respect and indicate rank. Senior JROTC cadets may address junior JROTC cadets by their first name, but not the other way around.

SALUTING

In addition to honoring those senior in rank with a title, the military requires a hand salute in many cases. By properly executing the hand salute, you show respect for those in positions of authority. A sloppy or poorly given salute can mean a number of different problems:

- An inappropriate attitude or possible disrespect for a person who deserves the honor
- A lack of understanding on how to execute the salute

Hand Salute

The hand salute is one of the most recognizable courtesies of the military way of life. Ages ago, the salute was a greeting that indicated you were not holding a weapon in your hand. Today, it is a way to show respect.

Whom to Salute

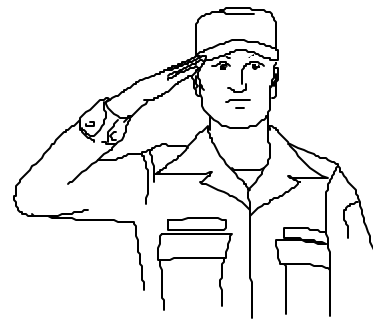
You must render the salute to all commissioned and warrant officers. Generally, you do not salute noncommissioned officers or

petty officers; however, there are exceptions. For example, when you act as a squad leader, salute your platoon sergeant when making reports.

How to Salute

When a leader who is in charge of a formation commands "*present, arms,*" you should execute a salute. If you are not carrying a rifle, you can give the hand salute in three different ways depending on whether you are wearing headgear, glasses, or both.

1. When wearing headgear with a visor (with or without glasses), raise your right hand sharply, fingers and thumb extended and joined, palm facing down. Place the tip of your right forefinger on the rim of the visor slightly to the right of your right eye. Barely turn the outer edge of your hand downward so neither the back of your hand nor the palm is clearly visible from the front. Keep your hand and wrist straight, your elbow inclined slightly forward, and the upper arm horizontal.



Hand Salute Wearing Headgear with a Visor

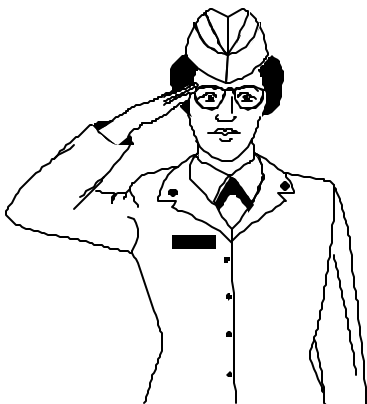
2. When wearing headgear without a visor, or you are **uncovered**, and without glasses, execute the hand salute in the same manner

as previously described in subparagraph 1 except touch the tip of your right forefinger to the forehead near and slightly to the right of your right eyebrow.



Hand Salute without a Visor or Glasses

3. When wearing headgear without a visor, or you are uncovered, and with glasses, execute the hand salute in the same manner as above except touch the tip of your right forefinger to that point on the glasses where the temple piece of the frame meets the right edge of your right brow.



Hand Salute with Glasses (without a Visor)

When **reporting** or rendering a courtesy to an individual, turn your head and eyes toward the person and simultaneously salute. In this situation, execute the actions without command. The subordinate initiates the salute at the appropriate time and terminates it upon acknowledgment.

When to Salute

Military regulations on conduct require you to salute, even when carrying a rifle, when you meet and recognize a person entitled to the honor, except under the following conditions:

- When on public transportation, including buses and trains
- When in public places such as stores and theaters
- When giving the salute would be inappropriate or physically impractical (such as when officers are acting as drivers or passengers of civilian vehicles or when one has both hands occupied carrying articles)
- While indoors except when reporting to an officer or when on duty as a guard
- When one or both parties are in civilian clothes

Conditions under which you must salute are:

- When you hear the national anthem, “To the Colors” or “Hail to the Chief” (if you are in uniform)
- When the national colors pass you
- During all official greetings

- During reveille and retreat, when within sight of the flag or the sound of the music and in uniform
- During the rendering/sounding of honors
- When first **uncasing** the colors or later when casing them
- When pledging allegiance to the flag while outdoors and in uniform. (Indoors in uniform requires that you stand at attention and face the flag, but you do not salute. Indoors in civilian clothing requires that you stand at attention, face the flag, and place your right hand over your heart.)
- When reporting

REPORTING

Reporting is requesting and obtaining permission to speak to a senior officer or being notified that a senior officer wants to speak with you. How you report to that officer may change according to local policy and to the location (in an office or outdoors), situation (under arms), and/or reason for reporting.

SHOWING RESPECT TO SENIOR OFFICERS

When an officer enters an office for the first time each day, the first person to see the officer calls the room to attention. If at any time, another, higher ranking officer enters the office, the first person to see that officer again calls the room to attention. This same practice holds true if an officer enters a barracks — that is, the first person to see the officer calls the room to attention. Everyone rises to attention except those personnel who are on work details; however, they must

rise if the officer stops and addresses them directly.

When an officer enters the dining area, the first person to see the officer calls the **mess** to “at ease.” You may remain seated and continue eating unless directed otherwise by the officer. If you are seated at a chair and the officer addresses you directly, rise to attention and respond. If you are seated on a bench, stop eating and sit at attention until the officer has ended the conversation.

Position of Honor

The **position of honor** dictates that those of lower rank walk, sit, or ride to the left of those with senior rank. When entering a vehicle (car or small boat), you should enter first, staying to the left of the officer. When you arrive at your destination and leave the vehicle, the senior officer should exit first.

DID YOU KNOW?

The position of honor originated during medieval times when knights fought primarily with their sword in their right hand. Since their left arm held a shield for defense, their right side — the fighting side — was their position of honor.

CONCLUSION

The pride and respect that come from traditions, customs, and courtesies make for a strong, well-run organization. Taking part in these traditions, customs, and courtesies builds esprit de corps and respect in your organization — indications of what success is all about.

Personal courtesies and good manners are a basic part of military courtesy. By showing proper respect, you gain respect from others and a sense of pride within yourself. Using the proper salutes and actions shows that you are proud of yourself, your unit, and Army JROTC.

